"Savak boasted that he's break me to his will. He said he'd tame me, make me crawl to him, begging for it...." The strange eyes flashed defiance for a moment. "But I never did. I couldn't escape them, but they had to enforce my submission. Then, yesterday, Savak told me I was to be the stake in a wager. I prayed you'd win me."

"Why?" Spock was curious. "You know nothing of me."

"I knew that you understood justice, even for a slave. You wouldn't let them beat me that day I spilled the water. And besides..." Kirk shrugged and continued with a certain naive honesty, "I reasoned that I couldn't be any worse off than I was. If you were like Savak I had nothing to lose. And perhaps...perhaps you wouldn't be so...so demanding."

"How do you account for the severity of your present injuries? The healer informs me that you almost died."

"That happened after Savak lost the wager. He was very angry. He...he called his friends, and they...they...I knew I was badly hurt, but I couldn't stop the bleeding. I didn't know if I was permitted to ask for help. When they'd...finished with me, Savak had me brought here.... He said he'd win me back...that you...you wouldn't keep me long."

"Enough." Even through the control Kirk's voice was becoming increasingly unsteady. Spock gathered himself and spoke cooly. To show too much compassion for the slave would be a weakness on his part, one which James would no doubt try to take advantage of later. Still--the Human had spirit worth preserving. "I will speak plainly with you, James Kirk. You will remain in my tent as my slave and body servant, and I demand instant and total obedience from you. You will familiarise yourself with your duties, and if, after you have learned them, you fail to please me, you will be whipped. I will not take you to bed, not out of any consideration for your customs, which are irrelevant here, but because I do not wish a bed slave. However, as you are considered valuable and desirable, it will be safer for you, and less awkward for me, if my companions assume that I use you in the customary fashion. If they thought I did not, they would approach you. You will therefore dress and behave as is expected of a pleasure slave; you will not speak of what passes between us in this tent and you will inform me at once if any sexual approach is made to you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then sleep now. Tomorrow you begin your duties."

The next few days passed quickly. Grateful to be free from pain and fear, Kirk quelled his anger as well as he could and set himself to learning his new master's preferences. Spock was patient with him while he learned, and his duties were not in fact difficult. He learned to care for Spock's clothes and weapons, to keep the tent in order, and to prepare and serve food to his master's liking. He attended Spock in the bath, helped him to dress, and was careful to obey his every command promptly

Spock kept his word, and no sexual advances were made to him. In the beginning Kirk was nervous and suspicious, especially on the first night after the healer had declared him fully fit. He saw Spock settled into bed and was turning to seek his couch, when his master said quietly, "You will sleep here."

Looking round he saw that Spock had turned back the bedcover, and his eyes widened with fear.

Spcok frowned impatiently. "Get in. A pleasure slave shares his master's bed, and now that you are recovered, it would be thought strange if the work slaves saw that you do not sleep with me."

His heart pounding, Kirk slipped beneath the covers and lay tensely, waiting for the caresses he was sure would soon begin. To his relief and astonishment, Spock turned onto his side and in a few minutes was asleep. Gradually the Human relaxed as he realized that Spock did not intend to claim him and thereafter he took his place in his master's bed without fear.

He was well fed, for whereas Savak had made him eat with the general slaves, Spock insisted that he share his meals. His bloodstained tunic disappeared, to be replaced by garments of fine silk, which, while more revealing than he would have liked, were certainly more comfortable than the coarse tunic Savak had given him.

He even had some free time, for Spock commanded the services of a general slave to do the heavy work such as the carrying of water, a task Savak had insisted he perform. Indeed, as time passed, Kirk realized that Spock was taking special pains to ensure that he had no reason to leave the tent alone--his only exercise was the occasional walk with his master. Slowly it dawned on him that the Vulcan was treating him like some exotic, valuable pet, establishing in the minds of his companions that his slave was jealously guarded, and not to be tampered with. His conviction was confirmed by the occasional envious remarks of his fellow slaves. Since they all depended on the whims of the warriors for their very lives, no slave despised another for making the best of his lot, indeed, those like Kirk who were petted and indulged, were envied by their fellows who had not the same protection.

Fear touched Kirk again the night Satak dined in his master's tent, and he wondered if he would be ordered to amuse the guest, but though the Vulcan studied him with frank admiration and made several comments that brought the color to his cheeks, he made no attempt to touch him, and Kirk was required only to serve the food and wine.

It seemed that even Satak was to be deceived as to Spock's relationship with Kirk, for when the two Vulcans settled down to conversation, Kirk was gestured to sit at Spock's feet. His master's hand played idly with his hair and gently caressed his face, but when Satak left, Spock immediately resumed his slightly distant manner. Kirk resigned himself to the fact that escape was, for the present, impossible. Convinced now that Spock had no physical interest in him, he determined to serve the Vulcan to the best of his ability. He would not risk being sold again.

One evening Spock was invited with his fellow trainees to dine in Selon's tent. Though he had been carefully instructed in how to behave, Kirk was nervous--this was his first appearance in public since he became Spock's property, and he knew that the warriors were curious about him. He kept his eyes lowered as he followed Spock into the large tent and took his place at the foot of his master's couch. Food was brought and placed on a small table in front of him so that he could serve Spock without leaving his side.